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ABSTRACT

Although in some countries adult education still has little to do with vocational training, it is apparent that in the future a new notion of "trade" or "profession" will form the educational nucleus around which general knowledge and cultural interests can be organized. If the new approach to education is based on the "vocational needs," these needs have to be identified on three levels: the labor market level, and the level of social demands, and that of personal aspirations. This involves a consideration of the role of the human and social sciences which is examined in this booklet. Other areas dealt with are: community development as planned interaction between economic, social, and cultural development; the creative use of leisure; the new role of arts; and the movement towards permanent education. (NL)

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COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL CO-OPERATION

COMMITTEE FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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NEW TRENDS IN ADULT EDUCATION

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COMMITTEE FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL EDUCATION

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I. INTRODUCTION

One of the tasks of the Council for Cultural Co-operation is to ensure comprehensive and systematic study of the whole field of adult education in Europe and to develop comparable features and a common terminology.

A first step was made in this direction with the publication of the pilot-study on "Workers in Adult Education, their status, recruitment and professional training" (1).

Such a descriptive account cannot be considered to be an end in itself, it naturally aims at further efforts to be undertaken with a view to co-ordinating more closely the different national features. And this in turn can be achieved only within a new and general concept which seems to be evolving as various obsolete traditions are gradually being dropped.

The concept of permanent education is now gaining general acceptance, and it is against this background that we must try to assess all those new trends and rapidly growing needs in the field of adult education.

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(1) "Education in Europe", Section III, Nr. 5.

II. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Although in some countries adult education has still little to do with vocational training, it becomes apparent that a new notion of "trade" or "profession", i.e. professional expertise combined with a flexible and open-minded attitude, shall henceforth form the educational nucleus around which general knowledge and cultural interests can be organised.

It seems indeed that this is the only possible approach to education in an age when the conception of knowledge as an exploration of an anticipated image of the universe or of a relatively fixed encyclopaedia has become absurd.

Vocational training and cultural development of the personality are to be seen rather as an inseparable unity moving towards the fulfilment of the individual vocation and thereby lending a new-found meaning to the existence of the people of our time.

This kind of vocational education aims at developing every possible aspect and interest of the individual and makes them converge.

Any of these aspects and interests can therefore serve as a starting point for what has been called "the educational strategy" which is intended to lead to the fullest possible development of the personality.

We have to overcome the prejudice that the culture acquired through general education is more comprehensive and valuable than the culture transmitted through vocational training and professional activity. We have by now largely gone beyond the narrow notion of "trades", for the rapid evolution of technology and professional mobility require the basic education to be more and more general and cultural.

To cope with this rapid evolution and constantly changing demands the educational process has to be spread over the whole of the human life (1) and must at any moment be based on

- the student's actual knowledge,
- his previous orientation and environment,
- his immediate concrete needs.

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(1) Block-release systems proved more efficient than day-release systems

The problem is simple as long as it is limited to the acquisition of skills. It gets complicated if a passage from mere skill into knowledge is implied. The "educational strategy" is bound to fall back on well-known principles particularly important in the teaching of adults:

(a) New knowledge must be connected with or integrated in previous knowledge; or it must amend, change or replace previous knowledge in which case previous knowledge is an obstacle to new knowledge. This obstacle will not be removed by being ignored. It will rather grow to the extent to which it is ignored.

(b) The individual learning process implies a need for permanent self-control and self-correction by the student. Learning means both adding to and re-orienting one's knowledge. Reorientation presupposes the ability to survey and control.

(c) The assessment of knowledge and achievements is to be based largely and progressively on the principle of self-evaluation and determined jointly in two dimensions by:

- a certain minimum knowledge required;
- what the individual wishes to add to that minimum of his own initiative.

Summary

1. Vocational education as described above means a practical and topical realisation of the concept of permanent education. It is based on the learner's actual knowledge and previous orientation and it aims at constantly meeting his concrete needs. Its starting point and nucleus is (for practical reasons of educational strategy) the profession seen as an individual vocation.

2. A precise analysis of what is the elementary knowledge appropriate to every trade and profession should make it possible to establish links between them, and, for each group of profession, to outline a common basic training programme. This would greatly facilitate the transfer from one profession to another. Technical colleges, big enterprises and trade unions should undertake this research at European level.

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III. THE PROBLEM OF NEEDS

The new approach to education is based on the new notion of professions (as described in the foregoing chapter) and on concrete and actual needs. It is an inductive and empirical approach : the aim of education is to enable people to meet ever-changing needs.

In order to do this educationists must know as positively as possible what the actual needs of their students are.

There is, of course, both an individual and a social aspect to the two questions :

- what does the student want to learn and
- what does he need to know.

An inventory of adult needs in the field of education would comprise the following categories:

1. Those needs resulting from professional activities.
2. Those connected with the different extra-professional activities and duties existing and rôles to be played within social group contexts such as family, local and regional settings, trade unions, etc.
3. Those resulting from the desire of the individual to reorientate his daily life towards a meaningful cultural purport in work and leisure.

In order to meet these needs it will be necessary to provide appropriate facilities such as :

1. Schemes for retraining and vocational guidance.
2. Socio-cultural facilities designed to stimulate participation in social life and cultural activities by which positive, active, critical attitudes can be developed.
3. Institutions and organisations to preserve and promote the creative faculties in an age when individual craftsmanship and the activities of the "inventive amateur" are giving way to mass production and mass consumption.

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Summary

1. The problem of needs is twofold, embracing both individual interests and claims of society. This vital tension is a permanent challenge to adult education which must spread its activities to all fields that are of interest to adults and of use to society.

2. While it would be Utopian to hope that adult education could ever develop into a panacea, it is essential to enlarge and revise the concept of education as a whole. Permanent education comes into being when and where ever individuals or groups of individuals can be made aware of their educational and cultural needs. To develop interests and intellectual curiosity is the first and foremost task of all education. This task will be greatly facilitated if compulsory schooling can be generalised and recast in such a way as to allow basic attitudes and motives required for permanent education to be implanted early and widely enough and thus to coordinate and integrate formal and informal education.

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IV. THE ROLE OF HUMAN AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

If the new approach to education is based on the "vocational needs" of the individual (cf. chapters II and III above), these needs have to be identified on three levels: the labour market level and the level of social demands and personal aspirations.

This can be done through practical experience supplemented by general surveys and by means of scientific analysis.

To rely on practical experience alone would mean to improvise. And this has been found a dubious method in highly developed industrial societies. On the other hand, it seems that the development of the applied human and social sciences has yet to catch up with the rapid demographic, economic and technological change. More refined methods are needed to cope with the "anti-human" influence which seems to characterise modern life. This means that, e.g. the manpower forecasting techniques actually in use will have to be improved in order to allow statistical estimates based on hypotheses to be developed into rules for future action.

This means further that the difficult and complex problem of assessing social demands and individual aspirations by means of exact scientific analysis would have to be tackled on a large scale.

No substantial progress towards overall educational planning can be expected unless ways and means are found to engage the human and social sciences in this new kind of research and to make their findings more directly applicable.

Some conditions for developing this research could be outlined as follows:

1. The forming of inter-disciplinary research teams organised to reflect existing infrastructures, situations and the complex of problems.

2. The integration of the development of research, into, and its identification with, the economic, social, and cultural development of a country or a region (interdependence of economic, social and cultural development).

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3. Its grounding in existing local environments and on present requirements.

4. Its orientation towards the future.

5. The permanent interaction between research and practical experience.

6. Coordination and cooperation on the national and international level.

Summary

1. The revolutionary development of the natural sciences and the speed with which technology is transforming the conditions of modern life have brought about a crisis in the evolution of human and social sciences. The value of both their traditional contents and their methods has become doubtful. It is particularly apparent that psychology and sociology are not yet fully adjusted to their new tasks set to them by modern civilisation.

2. The human and social sciences will have to develop infrastructures and methods which allow each individual not only to adapt himself to, but to participate voluntarily and actively in the permanent process of transformation of the world in which he lives.

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V. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The attempt to define the new role of human and social sciences makes it clear that a systematic overall approach is necessary. Such an approach could lead to the establishment of what might be called "comprehensive community programmes".

Not only economic development but all those branches of science and practice which have a decisive and direct impact upon man, and the society and environment in which he lives, are now largely being determined by this somewhat new interdisciplinary approach.

It is perhaps not pointless to see this development concept in the light of the historical evolution of adult education.

Adult education was instituted to meet a just claim that culture should be open to all. It then passed through a phase of research into the adaptation of man to his environment. It now bids fair to become a recognised factor of development of society.

The development of society should, however, not be over-emphasised at the expense of personality development. First and foremost, adult education has to prepare the individual to cope with the pressure which modern society exerts upon him.

It is also important that the social structure within which individuals are to find their places, should not be oversized, otherwise those individuals and the small groups they spontaneously constitute may be frustrated within the vast context in which they find themselves.

It should be recognised that encouraging people voluntarily and actively to contribute to changes means also preparing them to make constructive and positive criticism of proposed transformations and, if needs be, even to oppose them.

The relationship between education and action becomes apparent not only in that education should lead to action which is in itself again educative, but also in that action is to be based on the expertise and competence of those responsible and the free decision of all those concerned.

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Manifold important tasks devolve upon the adult educators (animateurs, development workers) within such "comprehensive community programmes". They are expected to be teachers and organisers and also politicians, business managers and practitioners of all sorts.

The term "animator" has raised some objections. As a matter of fact, it may suggest handling people and groups. Indeed this is one of the pitfalls of "animation"; another being, for "general animation", to remain at the level of amateur piecemeal work.

If a distinction between "generalist" and "specialist" is inevitable, the "generalist" must work with teams of "specialists" to achieve an expert approach.

There should not be "specialists in generalities". Any "generalist" should aim at perfection in one aspect of his function.

And there should not be "specialists in specialities only". The "specialist" should be trained to see his subject in relation to others, bearing in mind the characteristics of the actual environment. Besides, most often it is by looking more carefully into one particular subject that one will widen its scope and discover its relationship to other subjects.

Summary

1. It can be said that there is a strong trend towards establishing "comprehensive community programmes" which aim at planned interaction between economical, social and cultural development, at man's adjustment to and protection in society and society's transformation according to man's needs.

2. A new profession is being established which covers a much wider field than the traditional type of adult educator (1). This new profession gives evidence of the fact that education is now understood to be a life-long process and an integrating factor involving everybody's responsibility in the economic, social and cultural development of the environment and society in which he lives.

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(1) cf. Workers in Adult Education, their status, recruitment and professional training. "Education in Europe", Section III, No. 5

VI. THE CREATIVE USE OF LEISURE

The use of leisure and its conditions have, in some countries, been the subject of systematic study.

In this modern world, we are far from a common conception of the aim and purpose of existence. It has therefore become doubtful whether the problem of leisure can be discussed effectively, since it is the problem of what to do with our lives after we had earned our living.

Adult education is indeed concerned with this difficult problem. While its "amateur approach" has rightly been criticised and more and more stress is now laid on its vocational aspects, it cannot exclude from its concepts one of its more traditional and still essential raisons d'être : the idea of Service.

Community development is virtually based on this idea, and this is clearly a field in which agreement can be reached even among conceptionally and "originally" very different philosophies.

A means must be sought of unifying culture without standardising it. It therefore appears essential to promote inter-disciplinary research for an overall planning of cultural development.

The degree of interdependence between the individual and society is one of those few really fundamental questions of human life.

If individual activities promote a more intensive culture, they should be undertaken by as many individuals as possible. To stimulate and initiate this is perhaps the most delicate and fastidious task of adult education, particularly at a time which can be characterised as being rich in means, but poor in aims.

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Industrial civilisation, conditioned by mass-production and mass-consumption, has deprived many people of their natural disposition to freely choose a personal task and to carry it out. In order to make sense of one's life it is essential to set oneself objectives and to reach goals of one's own. Adult education should try and help people in their attempts to give a new-found meaning to their work by associating it with creative or inventive leisure activities.

Summary

1. Adult education is concerned with the promotion of leisure activities within social group contexts. This important factor of community development is virtually based on the idea of service which could form a common platform for co-operation of otherwise very different groups. A means must be sought of unifying culture without standardising it.

2. Adult education is further concerned with the individual's cultural enrichment and personality development, in which he does not seek to be patronised or protected, but seeks ways and means of protecting himself against the nihilistic boredom of mass-production and mass-consumption.

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VII. THE NEW ROLE OF ARTS

If cultural achievements are those values which survive a civilisation, it is essential in democratic society to make people both aware of these values and conscious of their responsibilities.

Unlike earlier and other forms of social order where these responsibilities lay with a few and only this so-called élite was expected and admitted to have good taste, democratic society brings this concern to bear upon everyone.

Everyone will consequently need to develop a certain sensitivity and taste, and this should give proof to the fact that people's sense of beauty and intuitive artistic insight is very often under-rated.

Folklore and crafts which have always been the sources from which any higher art forms have been derived, are however now giving way to mass-production and mass-consumption.

This deprives people of their desire and opportunity "to express themselves fully and as original personalities". They consequently miss appreciation by the others and a sound degree of self-confidence.

This also deprives them of the possibility to counter-balance scientific rationalism and commercial utilitarianism which often governs their professional lives.

If everybody is expected to take an active part in the progress of civilisation, it is essential to rediscover intuitive approaches to it, particularly for those to whom the language of science will most likely remain foreign.

It should be emphasised that such intuitive approaches, however non-intellectual they may be, imply critical and active attitudes. Education through art and introduction to the arts are two aspects of the very same practical approach.

Art in itself is not a medium of education, but an educational element exists in man's encounter with art. As a mirror image of man's condition, a work of art may be educative in character.

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The creative activity, on the other hand, is in itself educative since it opens to the individual the practical approach as well as the free choice of expression and of a task to be achieved.

Permanent comparison between the work of the amateur and works of art should develop in him a sense of self-criticism and good taste.

Some minor aspects of esthetic expression should not be neglected either, such as home decorating, and the introducing of good taste into crafts producing souvenirs for tourists and other objects sold in curiosity shops.

It would be interesting to have a survey made of some of the more important new institutions, methods and programmes which have been developed in recent years mainly or wholly in response to the growing awareness of these problems in the member countries.

This survey should bring to light existing needs, varying aims and results, modes of organisation (in particular the participation of users in the management), stages of development etc. It could also be pointed out that in several countries folklore and the creation of new popular music have been rediscovered as centres of interest.

Summary

1. As an increasing number of aspects of modern life are being determined by collectivist tendencies, the individual finds himself frequently frustrated within larger or smaller group interests inducing him to assume passive attitudes.

These passive (non-creative) attitudes are likely to be reinforced in affluent societies.

2. In order to encourage creative expression as a means for the development of personality and for helping the individual to play a more active part in society, it seems desirable

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to see "animation networks" organised in the various countries, centred round places that would be at the same time "animation centres", research and animators' training centres (1).

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(1) Following the recommendations made by a Study Group on Introduction to the Arts :

"The structural organisation should be threefold:

(i) a network of adult education establishments whose programme includes all elementary forms of introduction to the arts;

(ii) a system of specialised residential courses;

(iii) a chain of properly equipped centres specialised in the introduction to the arts and possessing highly qualified permanent teaching staff."

VIII. TOWARDS PERMANENT EDUCATION

The whole of this report has to be seen against the background of the overall concept of Permanent Education seen as the organising principle of all education.

Chapters II to VII are thus intended to be attempts to elaborate some of those aspects and implications of Permanent Education which are particularly relevant in the field of adult education.

Starting from the assumption that life has become an experiment not only for scientists and artists, but for everyone, everyone is called upon to "live conscientiously", that is to say to identify his life as a permanent search. This requires an effort which needs to be encouraged.

There is inertia not only in the individual, particularly the unprepared or ill-prepared, but also in traditional patterns and features, and particularly in those that had once proved their value.

There is also the comfort of security which is an ally of all kinds of conformism.

The efforts made today by our society towards a comprehensive structural organisation of permanent education (and thereby towards the promotion and development of adult education) are similar to those that were made by nineteenth century society to establish compulsory primary education. The similarity lies in the difficulties and prejudices to be overcome. It goes without saying that permanent education is not meant to extend the compulsory system of education. It is to be based on individual needs, aspirations and interests which have to be assessed, evaluated or raised.

This costs money, for it is clear that the voluntary efforts of adults and adolescents who are not prepared to subscribe substantially to their continuing education, can only be stimulated by facilities placed at their disposal.

Provisions in the field of adult education are particularly insufficient. On the other hand, large increases in expenditure on permanent education cannot be expected from Governments in the near future.

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In the meantime, new ways of financing adult education (e.g. through private initiatives, foundations and industrial enterprises) should therefore be examined, if possible, on the international level.

How does each country provide educational benefits after the end of the period of compulsory schooling? What form do such benefits take? For whom are they intended? These are the three questions involved in a joint research project which one would like to see commissioned by the Council of Europe.

It is true that permanent education exists as an idea and a concept which is gaining general acceptance. However, ideas and concepts have little force if they are not institutionalised.

The numerous research projects suggested by a CCC's Working Party illustrate that there is still a fluid area which has to be conquered by legislation and administration of a new, rather flexible type allowing for changes. The Council would be better placed than any national authority to suggest, in the light of both the results of the proposed research and living experience, possible structures of permanent education.

It has to be clear from the outset that something entirely new needs to be created for which no patterns or standards can be sought in the past.

It is for the first time in the history of European civilisation that education is seen as something that concerns everybody throughout his life. And it is only now that the inductive method of intellectual enquiry which took a long time to establish itself, can serve as a basis for the modern approach to research and learning.

This would imply the development of educational aims and needs by and through education itself which requires "comprehensive and dynamic structures", that is to say : "permanent, concerted and integrated research and planning mechanisms in the field of education and cultural development".

It is obvious that neither traditional school systems (which are limited to certain groups of the population and to age groups) nor traditional adult education schemes (which are too vague, too varied and incidental) can serve as models.

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On the contrary, it will be necessary to embark on an enquiry on what is wrong in the education of children, adolescents and adults, and consequently to undertake a critical analysis of existing institutions. In a second phase suggestions should be made how to initiate changes, in the light of similar trends discernible in various countries and with a view to outlining a general framework of structural organisation.

Among the problems traceable by the proposed critical analysis, two are likely to assume major importance during the second phase :

1. How to change the terminal character of school systems into an initiating function.

2. How to establish closer links between formal and informal education in order to allow for a permanent interaction.

It seems possible to envisage co-ordination of formal and informal education on both levels of basic and further education, whereby the formal character would be predominant at first and then gradually give way to informal features. There must be unity in the aims and diversity in the provision of educational benefits.

Thus one could imagine the following outline plan for permanent education:

I. Scheme for basic education ;
II. Scheme for vocational education ;
III. Scheme for further education and retraining ;
IV. Facilities for cultural activities and valuable leisure pursuits.

Summary

1. The Council of Europe seems ideally placed to commission research and to plan action with a view to translating the concept of Permanent Education into practical terms of structural organisation, methods and techniques.

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2. Trying to assess the difficulties which have hitherto been encountered in implementing this concept, one would wish that further attention should be concentrated on the following three questions which imply in particular the financial problem : How does each country provide educational benefits after the end of the period of compulsory schooling? What form do such benefits take? For whom are they intended?

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IX. NEW METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

It is evident that the concept of permanent education as described by a Working Party of the Council for Cultural Cooperation remains Utopian unless new powerful instruments can be developed and made generally available.

There are above all the mass media which can be used as the basis for more effective learning and teaching techniques than we have ever had at our disposal, particularly if they are built into combined and integrated systems (e.g. television and/or sound radio + programmed self-instruction and/or correspondence tuition + face to face meetings).

A Study Group of the Committee for Out-of-School Education on New Types of Teaching claimed this new technology to exist not only in theory but as a practical achievement having proved its value and effectiveness. It has to be developed into a permanent and regular feature of a comprehensive, coherent and integrated system of education.

Adult educators should be made aware that their traditional techniques of face to face teaching bring them into contact with only a very small proportion of the adult population. They cannot fail to be impressed by the power of media which could take adult education into virtually any household. But they should also be familiar with the defects of those media (no feedback, no active involvement of students, no adaptation to individual needs, etc.) which can only be overcome in integrated systems combining new and traditional types of teaching.

The problem of integrating mass media into existing school systems is naturally small compared to the obviously urgent need of creating entirely new types of teaching in the rapidly developing field of adult education where systematic approaches are often missing.

Governments and, in particular, Ministries of Education, would have to intervene with a view to creating permanent organisational structures of modern adult education and thus developing ad hoc collaboration between broadcasters and educators into an established institution available to everyone who wishes to make use of it.

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Besides the educational use which can and should be made of mass media, there is also their subliminal educative influence on the general public which is of considerable interest to adult education. One of its tasks is "screen education" which implies the education of viewers (and listeners) to make a choice, to develop critical attitudes, to defend themselves against depersonalising influences.

This prophylactic approach needs to be supplemented by efforts to introduce into non-educational programmes a "motivation" promoting the five main kinds of cultural adult education activity: physical (sports for all), manual (handcrafts, gardening, etc.), artistic, intellectual and social (civics).

Programmed instruction is another new technique of particular interest to adult education. It can be generally used in combined systems and is otherwise a valuable asset to the methodology of certain subjects for two different reasons:

(a) it forces the educationists to try to define their objectives and to plan learning experiences much more firmly and clearly;

(b) it introduces into home-study methods a higher degree of efficiency and adaptability to individual needs as well as of self-control and self-correction.

As the preparation of cybernetic programmes involves considerable investments, programmed instruction only pays if mass-production and mass-consumption can be assured.

Summary

1. Pedagogy which has long been regarded as an art, nowadays tends to become a science and even an industry. At least it depends more and more on scientific data and technologies which imply a more systematic, analytic, formal approach as well as a more precise evaluation of achievements ("docimology").

2. Not only new batteries of techniques have been developed but a new constellation of techniques has come into being. It is essential to base the methodological research on a general theory in order to determine which method is best suited for which purpose and to develop instructional patterns as well as programmes for teacher training. Constant efforts have to be made to assure and to intensify the interplay between research, experiment and teacher training.

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ERIC Clearinghouse
APR 6 1970
on Adult Education